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ABSTRACT

An exploration of the economic and historical causes of homelessness is combined with accounts of individuals and families who are on the streets or in shelters and how they came to that point. Following an overview of the problem of homelessness and its causes, nine chapters present stories of homeless individuals, friends, and families. These stories demonstrate that there is no culture of poverty that makes people poor and no culture of homelessness that leaves them without shelter. These stories show that large numbers of people become homeless through the processes of urban and industrial decline. The increase in the numbers of homeless people is a result of the social and economic transformations of American cities since the late 1970s. The last two chapters review the complex and simple realities of homelessness and offer some suggestions for resolving it. Shelters and shelter services are not the answer to homelessness; the only real answer lies in the provision of sufficient low-income and affordable housing. (Contains 203 references.) (SLD)

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